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DECORATION & FURNITURE

TALKS WITH DECORATORS.

VI.—MR. STENT'S OBJECTIONS TO "FRESCO" AND HIS PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS CONCERNING WALL AND CEILING DECORATION.

WHY will people not give up frescoing their ceilings?" said Mr. E. J. N. Stent, with an accent of despair. "Fresco in this enlightened age! Persons of taste of course avoid fresco, with its scrolls and flowers and cherubs, or rather what passes for it in this country, for, of course, there is no real fresco done nowadays; but the 'fresco painter' with his brush is at this instant mounted on his scaffold, and painting away all over the country. We build too hastily to permit of painting our walls and ceilings. The plaster is never allowed to settle properly.

dow—one of the most pleasing attractions of ornament; and lastly such treatment is easily managed."

"But there are many rooms and only one drawing-room in a house?"

"Then use fabrics, Japanese stuffs, or papers in preference to 'fresco.'"

"We are speaking of old houses and cracked ceilings, are we not?"

"If you will. Cartridge paper makes a handsome ceiling. The color is good, the texture is good, and it can be easily decorated by hand. It is necessary, of course, that the decoration be carried along the joints to conceal the lines.

"In choosing a ceiling paper get one with small, set design in self tints. The important thing to be considered is the lighting of the room. Strangely, that seems to be the last thing people think of in selecting wall papers."

easily within most people's means, and its improvement both in texture and artistic design is such that there is little that cannot be accomplished with it. Here for example."

Mr. Stent unrolled some white paper, which revealed a blue satin brocaded texture.

"This is for a luxurious bedroom and dressing-room. It is, in fact, a thin satin laid on paper and then printed. It has the effect of the most expensive satin fabric, but it will be pasted on the wall as a paper; the joints will show no more than a seam. Naturally it is much less expensive than a stuff. To accompany it is a yellow satin ceiling paper, manufactured in the same way.

"Aside from the considerations of light which depend on color, in selecting wall and ceiling hangings, the design should be chosen with reference to the size of the room. A small room by choosing a small design in self



SKETCH FOR A GRAND SALON DECORATION. BY BOUCHER

In fact, our houses never stop settling. The result is the plaster cracks, and after a few years, no matter how admirable the 'fresco painting,' it must be removed."

"What, then, do you suggest?"

"For the more ornamental ceilings, such as are desired in drawing-rooms, nothing is more appropriate than plaster work, giving just enough relief to catch the light, and treated with delicate color. Such treatment is valuable in doing over old ceilings that have settled and cracked. Let us suppose a drawing-room 36x17. Divide the ceiling into panels by $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch mouldings. Into these flat spaces introduce delicate ornament, such as festoons and ribbons in slight relief. Tint this either lighter or darker than the ground, but never in a different color. Then pick out the ornament in gold.

"The advantages are that the ornament, while simple, has the requisite elegance; the color, while agreeable, is not salient; the relief is sufficient to give light and sha-

"Could not a few explicit directions be given to that end?"

"Certainly. A room which receives only a north light needs warm, positive color—yellows, reds, terracotta. For a room with a southern exposure China blue is a good color. In rooms which receive strong sunlight olive or sage green gives a sense of coolness. An east room, a bedroom, for example, which it is desirable should seem cool in summer and warm in winter, may have the body paper cool in tint and the frieze, which the sunlight never touches, decidedly warm. In general terms, don't put cold grays, greens or blues in north or east rooms, nor warm reds, yellows and gold in south and west rooms. The ceiling papers should always be lighter in color and the ornament small and faint."

"All that you say of paper applies, I presume, to stuffs, chintz, or satin?"

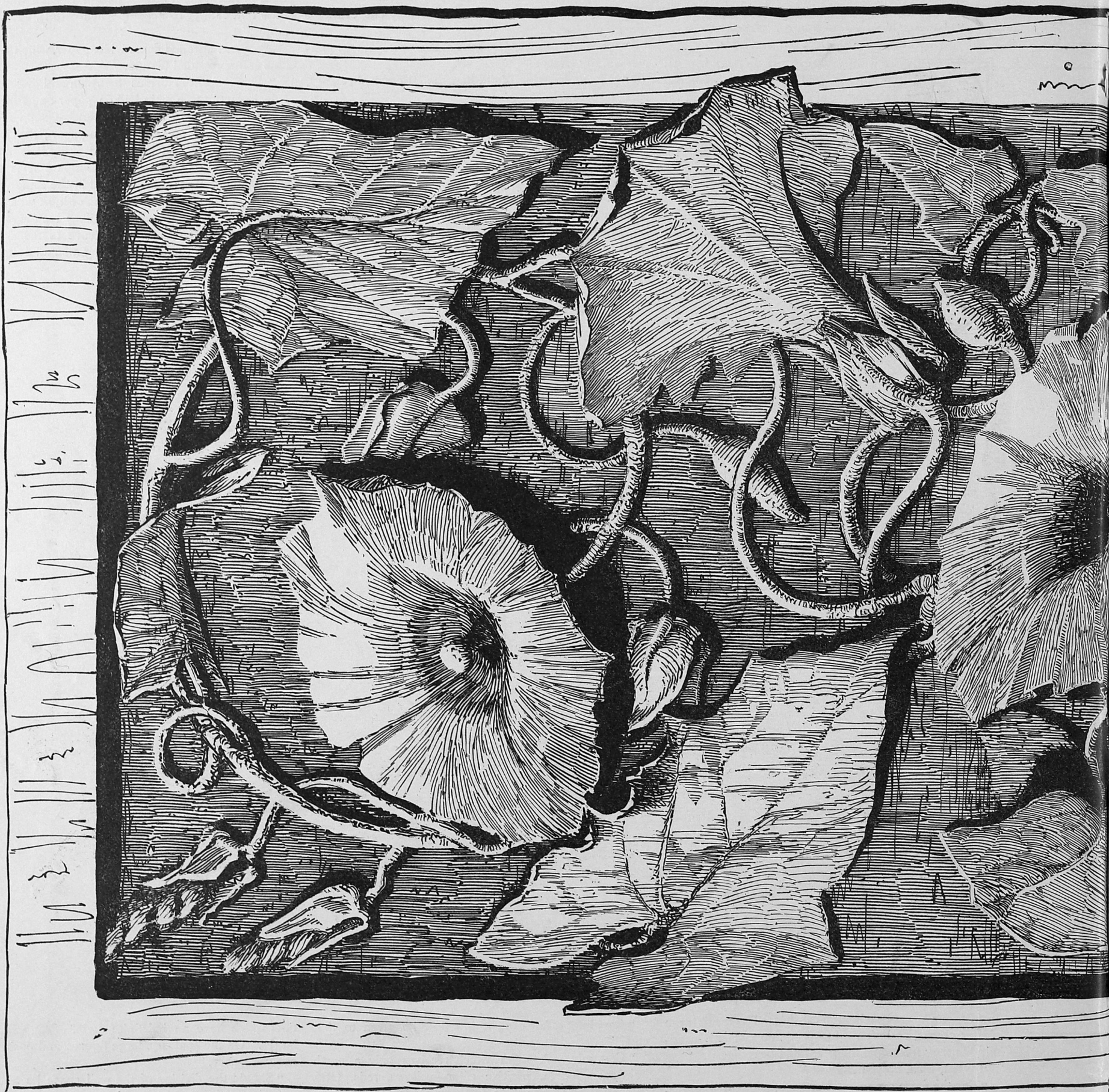
"Certainly. I speak of paper, because it comes more

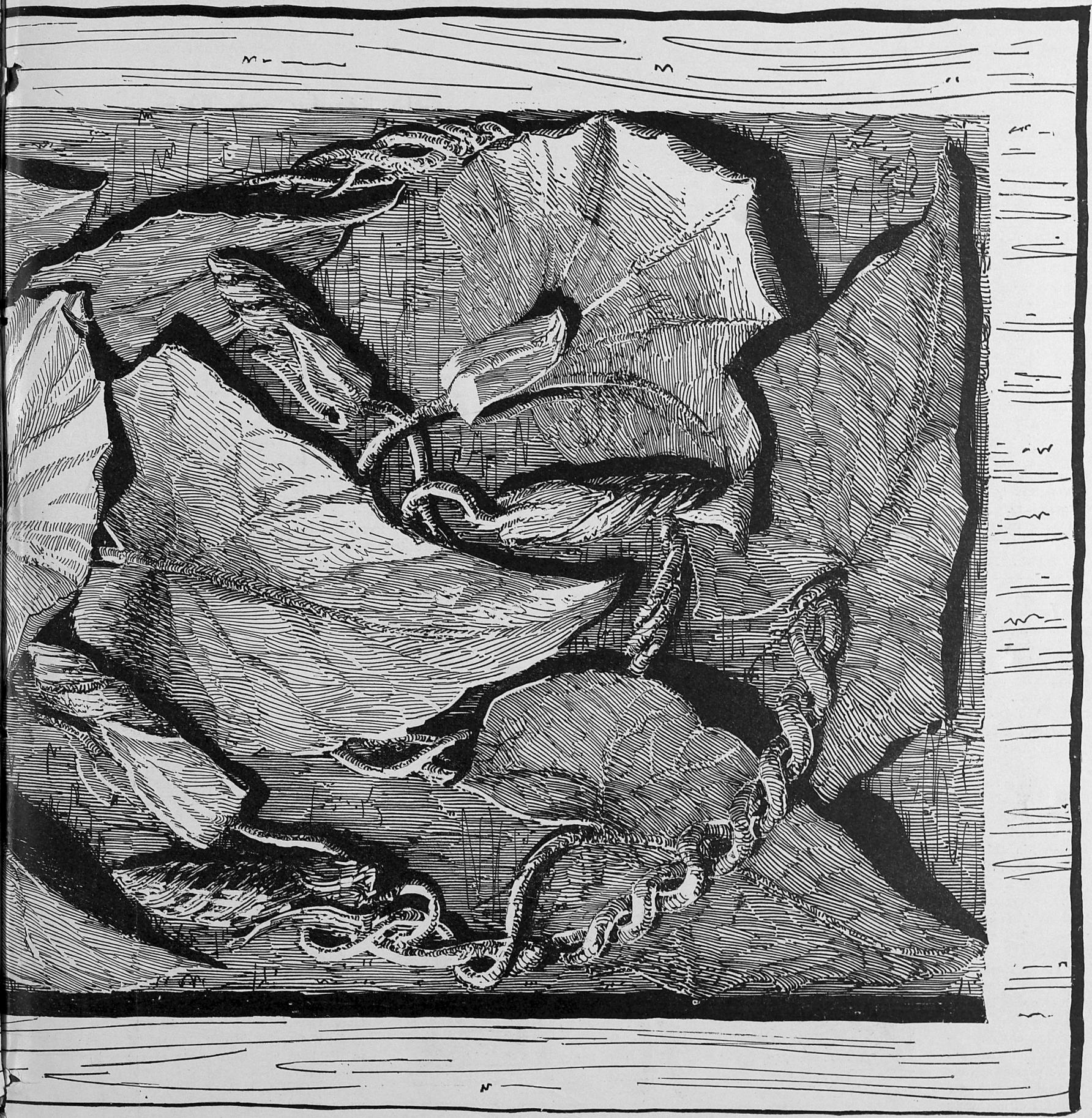
tints which have an indefinite aerial effect, will appear larger. On the contrary, large figures and positive tints contract space."

"Should the division of the wall space be about the same in the different rooms?"

"The general tendency now is to bring down the ceiling. This is not so important in bedrooms. There a frieze need not be insisted on. In other rooms low ceilings are preferred, and in remodelling houses built when high ceilings were in vogue, the frieze assists in reducing the height.

"But let me speak of a dining-room I am renewing for Mrs. Arthur Dodge, in which several of the points we have been considering enter. It is a high-ceilinged room, and not as large as the demands of fashionable life would exact in a new house. Some years ago it was elaborately 'frescoed,' with the usual result of cracked ceiling and faded, tarnished ornament.





DESIGN FOR CARVED WOOD PANEL. "CONVOLVULUS." BY L. W. MILLER.

"To cover the ceiling, bring it down, and thus give the room better proportions, and at the same time make it appear larger, I have divided it into panels by heavy oak beams. These reduce the ceiling 18 inches. In these panels I have ornament in relief, consisting of flowers and fruits in old Flemish styles, which are hand-painted in color and gold. In harmony with these oak beams is a Japanese leather paper with a ruddy brown ground, with bold ornament in silver of disks and chrysanthemums. Although I have advocated light delicate tints in decoration, a dining-room should have strong positive color.

"The doors, which were high, have been brought down by oak grills with festoons of jewels. I have endeavored to lower everything, because by increasing my horizontal lines I can give the appearance of space. On the other side of these grills is stained glass, visible from the hall. In the space between I have hung little Persian lamps, which give a very pretty effect both through the grill into the dining-room and through the glass into the hall. Another thing that comes to my aid is glass. Over the mantel was a tall vertical mirror. This mirror I take down and place it as a panel above the low side-board. This is subdivided horizontally by glass shelves mounted on slender brass rods. Thus, you see, I have added to my lines, and by the reflection of the silver which the shelves are to hold and of the interior of the room I extend all my boundaries. To replace this mirror, I put a horizontal glass over the mantel.

"Mrs. Dodge has some handsome old Dutch chairs, with inlays, after their fashion. These are to be retained, so I frame my mirrors in the same manner. The chandelier I take down, because it takes off the space by dividing it. Instead I light the room by sconces. These contribute their horizontal effect to the same end.

"In this way, you see, if you cannot place a larger number of guests at the table, it will appear the result of choice, not of necessity. We have both doubtless observed in many instances how agreeably such an impression will affect the mental atmosphere. Apart from æsthetic reasons, that seems to me an end worth striving for."

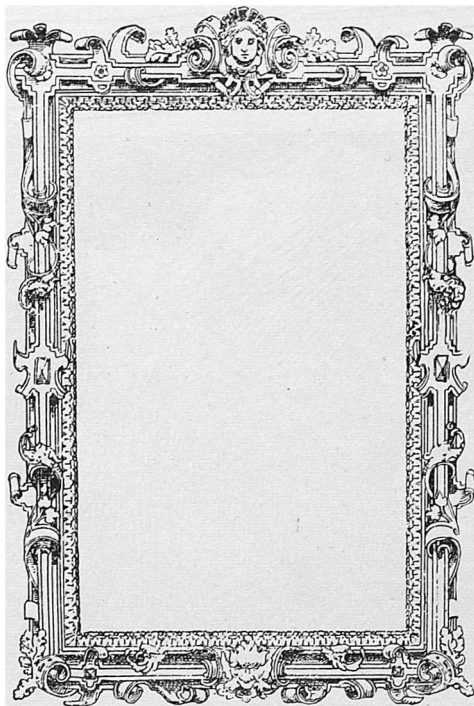
THE WINDSOR TAPESTRIES.

THE little manufactory established almost under the shadow of the royal palace at Windsor is the second attempt to introduce the making of tapestries in England. The first was by Charles the First and his queen, Henrietta, at Mortlake, on the Thames, near Richmond, and there are now in the Louvre specimens from the old works. One of these, after Raphael, the subject being the miraculous draught of fishes, was illustrated in *The Art Amateur* last month.

The second attempt is the result of a meeting between the late Prince Leopold and Mr. Henry, a French artist who had done a good deal of decorative work in England, in which the Prince was much interested, and he seized upon Mr. Henry's suggestion, and secured for the undertaking the patronage of the Queen. An old farmhouse was secured at the edge of the forest near the village of old Windsor, and a little colony of workmen from Aubusson and Beauvais was imported and planted there. This was in 1876. The enterprise was so successful that the six French workmen are now increased to twenty-five, and there are altogether seventy-five persons actively employed. The old farmhouse no longer answering the demands of increasing production, a factory has taken its place. It is built on the foundations of a favorite palace of William the Conqueror, where, if the spirits of the departed may be permitted to revisit the earth, that of his Queen, the industrious Matilda, must find exceeding delight in the prosperity of the new enterprise. About this little hive of industry has sprung up one of those model villages which have done much to sweeten the lives of the English artisans. The homes of the workmen are brick Elizabethan cottages, each with a well-kept garden. The hall for the exhibition of the tapestries in winter serves as a theatre, although, according to the English fashion,

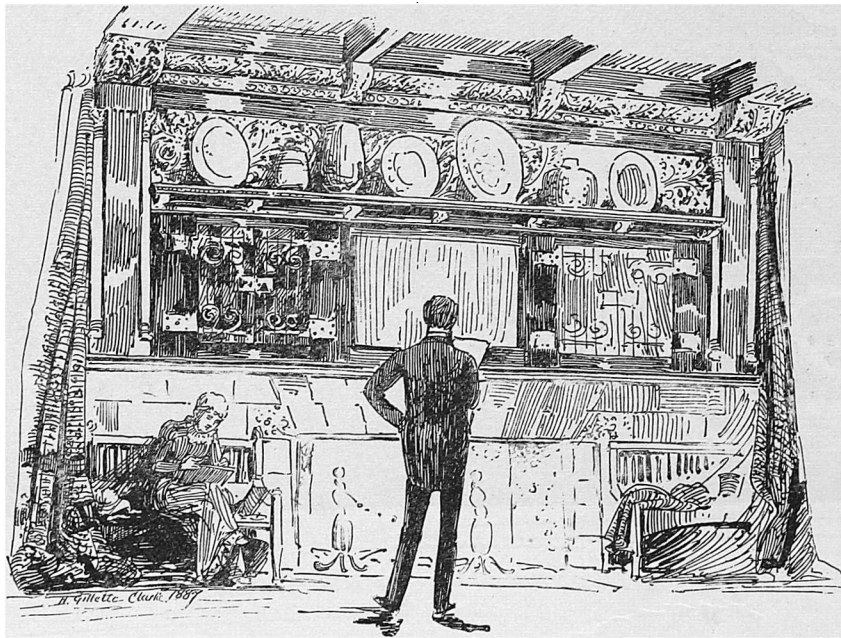
it is known as the "Institute." At each end of the building are large porticoes overlooking the cottage grounds, which have been christened *Porte St. Denis* and *Porte St. Martin*. There is also a French restaurant, in which at a breakfast given to Prince Leopold, that royal person was pleased to observe that the omelet, salad and coffee were better than he had ever tasted in Paris. Nothing seems to have been omitted in the attempt to acclimatize the French workmen.

In 1881 the Windsor manufacture ceased to be a pri-



MIRROR FRAME. LATE GERMAN RENAISSANCE.

vate enterprise, and a corporation was formed, of which Prince Leopold was president, the Princess Louise and Princess Helena vice-presidents, and on the executive committees were Sir Richard Wallace, Sir Albert Sassoon, Mr. Brassey, and Mr. Gibbs, president of the Bank of England. As yet no dividends have been declared, the profits of the business, by consent of the stockholders, going to build up the colony.



SUGGESTION FOR A PARLOR MANTEL AND FIREPLACE.

The first tapestries executed at the works were, very appropriately, scenes from "The Merry Wives of Windsor." They were exhibited in the Prince of Wales Pavilion at the Paris Exposition of 1878, and received the gold medal. They are now the property of Sir Albert Sassoon, who has many other tapestries made at Windsor, including "The Seasons," a splendid set of draperies after Boucher. Mr. Henry Brassey had executed for himself a series illustrating the Saxon preparations for resisting the Norman invasion of 1066. J. E. Hodson

composed for Mr. Coleridge Kennard, a connoisseur of tapestries, a series illustrating some of Tennyson's poems, also to be executed at Windsor. This is the artist who designed the scenes from the chase, which hang in the hall of Mr. Cornelius Vanderbilt's house. A commission came from the Duke of Westminster not long ago for coverings, from special designs, for twenty-four Louis Seize arm-chairs for Eaton Hall, his superb palace near Chester. Orders from similar public-spirited patrons of art are becoming numerous at the works, which seem now to be well established. Perhaps one day the foreign artisans will be succeeded by Englishmen, and then the enterprise will have more of a national character.

M. G. HUMPHREYS.

Old Books and New.

BEHIND THE SCENES.

HIS last book having gone under the hammer for what was to be reported in the newspapers one third the price that he had paid for it, he uttered a sigh of relief, and to a surprised inquirer said that he felt rejuvenated, like Faust in the opera, after he has thrown off his dark mantle. He had the reputation of a bookworm, and the face of one, and stooped, from his habit of bending over books. The love of books that entitles one to be known as a bibliophile is a passion, like gambling, and makes a mark upon the face of a man that Lavater could easily read. Like most passions, it is a contagious malady. He never knew where he caught it; his surroundings were not for the development of a taste for illuminated manuscripts or books in bindings with royal coats-of-arms, and marginal notes in a queer, unreadable handwriting. He had, perhaps, inherited it. He knew well the literature of three or four countries when he came out of school; at that age he bought books to read them or to illustrate from them, in newspapers, new facts with old stories. Every one knows how fast books accumulate; the presentations of friends, the least-expected acquisitions, come to one who has an embarrassment of riches, even as water comes to the sea. There are few books that are not worth reading hurriedly for a note, an idea, a reference. He made scrap-books with his notes; they gave him a standard of criticism; he judged a book by the number of notes it would yield, and he pretended that it was fair and just and reasonable. He made parcels of his books, and, like the genii in the Aladdin tale who went through the streets of the city shouting, "Who will exchange old lamps for new?" he went to old book-stores to exchange his new books for old ones. The city of New York was founded by Hollanders, who were great collectors of tulips, you remember; and New York is now a city of collectors, from Mr. Brayton Ives, who collects the first classics, to the Doctor, who is a collector of pipes; and every curiosity-shop gets the catalogue of every other. In second-hand book-stores they are very particular in their catalogue exchange-list, having a preference for the Morgand catalogue, the prices of which are made for the edification of the profane. Those who know write to Morgand; those who do not are grateful to the bookseller who points to the Morgand catalogue and says, "But you may have the book for much less." The bookseller has six months' credit in Paris or London, and will be glad to give you four or five.

Auguste Fontaine was a man of great ideas. He would look for some neglected author long dead and forgotten, buy his books for a song on the quays, then go to the Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, where dwelt in beatific peace Paul Lacroix, known to the world of bookmen as Bibliophile Jacob. Paul Lacroix was an old gentleman who loved to delve in old books and to write about them, and he had seen so many books that he felt certain a book he had not seen was scarce. Fontaine had made "a corner" of the novels written by a mediocre writer in the Revolutionary period, *Rétif de*